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Title:

Comments: Coconino Forest Plan Revision, 2014

As I look at the recently issued document and the four alternatives, I don't see any provisions for repairing the damage done to forest/community relations caused by Nora Rasure's decision years ago to allow the Snowbowl ski resort to make artificial snow from reclaimed wastewater. I've been a witness again and again to the damage caused by her ruling: a meeting of tribal elders and medicine people in which grown Native American men cried openly about the decision; the pain in the faces of my Hopi friends when they discuss Rasure's act; the repeated efforts on the part of activists and tribal leaders to fight the decision; and our pain as the legal system (in which there were no Native American judges) reinforced Rasure's action again and again.

How are you going to address the damage - your own words: ""...That trusting relationship has been severely damaged by the Forest's decision to allow snowmaking with treated effluent water as part of the Snowbowl's expanded development." as you repeat the damage by not holding meetings on the reservations. Again, in your own words: The most valuable resource for life in the desert Southwest is water. At the core of almost every Southwestern tribe's culture, religion, and value system is water, and most tribes see the San Francisco Peaks as the single, pre-eminent source of all water, and, therefore, all life. To them, snowmaking is an intrusion into the natural order and an invasion into realms that only higher powers are responsible for. The Snowbowl decision is seen by the tribes as yet another effort by the government to further erode their culture, and without their culture, they can no longer exist as a people.

The Snowbowl decision destroyed a relationship that was built up over 25 years between the Forest and the tribes working together as colleagues with a shared stewardship responsibility. It has undercut the credibility of the Forest Service with Indian people and has created a breach that will be very difficult to restore.

I urge you to schedule meetings on the Hopi, Navajo, Havasupai, Hualapai, Apache and any other concerned reservations.

Please keep me posted on your future actions.

Mary Sojourner

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